United Nations S/2015/32

Security Council

Distr.: General
19 January 2015
English
Original: Spanish

Letter dated 16 January 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the Security Council is scheduled to hold an open debate on Tuesday, 27 January 2015, on the topic "Protection of civilians in armed conflict: protection challenges and needs faced by women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict settings". The related concept note is attached (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Cristián **Barros**
Ambassador
Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations

15-00644 (E) 210115 210115

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 16 January 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English]

Security Council open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict: protection challenges and needs faced by women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict settings

Concept note

Background

For the first time, under the presidency of Chile, the upcoming biannual debate on the protection of civilians, to be held on 27 January 2015, will focus on the protection challenges and needs faced by women and girls in armed conflict and post-conflict settings.

The outbreak, the continuation and the escalation of armed conflict and the recurrence of violence in post-conflict settings all over the world have taken a particular toll on women and girls, who have been rendered more vulnerable as a result of gender inequality and been directly targeted as part of war tactics and deliberate assaults on their rights. The Security Council continues to receive alarming reports of unacceptable violence committed against women, including many settings in which control of women's rights is at the very centre of the armed conflict. Although a particular focus on women's protection has been a mainstay of Council deliberations in thematic discussions since the turn of the last century, many gaps remain and deserve proper consideration by the Council.

The following paragraphs, taken from the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security of September 2014 (S/2014/693), starkly highlights the vastly dispiriting global landscape of women's rights in armed conflict-affected settings, and the urgent need to address the prominent underlying cause of gender inequality.

> "... In Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, women have been directly targeted in the outbreak of violence, with reports of rape, forced marriage, forced prostitution, restrictions of movement, enforcement of dress codes and stoning of women for alleged adultery in areas controlled by militants from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. The escalation of violence in Iraq in 2014 includes the mass killing in Baghdad of women alleged to be sex workers and the targeting and mass abduction of minority women (S/2013/693, para. 34).
>
> "In the Central African Republic and South Sudan, women have been disproportionately affected by mass displacement. In some areas of South Sudan, rates of female-headed households are close to 60 per cent and women and girls face significant security risks, including in sites for the protection of civilians. In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, there are continued concerns regarding the presence of armed groups, the increased number of internally displaced persons and refugees, who are mostly women and children, and continued incidents of sexual violence. In Afghanistan, the

number of women and girls killed or injured increased by 61 per cent in the first half of 2013, as compared with 2012, and targeted killings or attacks against women in public roles continued" (S/2014/693, para. 35).

"As violent extremism continues to spread, there is growing recognition that women's rights are under threat and that the role of women in countering terrorism and extremism is underutilized" (S/2014/693, para. 46).

Security Council developments

In 2000, the Security Council recognized, through the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), that the international community must make further efforts to understand the unique impact of armed conflict on women, the varying forms of violence they face and, consequently, the specific protection required to address their needs. It also stressed the importance of increasing women's participation in all aspects of the prevention and resolution of conflicts, including peacekeeping efforts and humanitarian operations. In adding "Women, peace and security" as a thematic item to its agenda, the Council thus paved the way for the inclusion of a gender perspective in the agenda on protection of civilians.

In resolution 1960 (2010), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to set up monitoring and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence and called upon parties to conflicts to make specific, time-bound commitments to combat sexual violence. The framework created by the Council through this resolution contemplates ad hoc reporting conduits, a "naming and shaming" principle, and formal engagement with parties to conflict. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, appointed pursuant to resolution 1888 (2009), oversees the operationalization of this framework.

Furthermore, resolution 2122 (2013) focuses on the need to address the full range of human rights violations and abuses experienced by women in armed conflict and post-conflict situations. These include but are not limited to conflict-related killings and sexual violence in its multiple forms, such as rape, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization, forced abortion, forced prostitution, sexual exploitation, trafficking, sexual enslavement, forced circumcision and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity;[1] the arbitrary detention of women and girls; abduction and forced marriage of women and girls; attacks on women and girls' education, including direct attacks on school girls; threats to families; increased targeting of civil society and women human rights defenders; continuing threats against women political leaders and media personnel; the destruction of civilian infrastructure; restrictions of movement; the enforcement of dress codes; physical violence meted out to those who do not abide by rules imposed by parties to armed conflict, including death, as in the case of stonings and honour killings; a heightened risk for women and girls, who account for the majority of victims of human trafficking overall, to fall victim to sex and labour trafficking; election-related violence against women; disproportionate suffering of internally displaced persons, refugees, asylum seekers, returnees and stateless persons as a result of lack

[1] Guidance Note of the Secretary-General, Reparations for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, June 2014, available at www.ohchr.org/Documents/Press/GuidanceNoteReparationsJune-2014.pdf.

of safety and services, discriminatory gender norms and limited access to safe livelihoods for women to meet their basic needs and those of their families; and intimidation and harassment of individuals because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Council has also expressed its concern at women's exacerbated vulnerability in armed conflict and post-conflict situations as a result of unequal citizenship rights, gender-biased application of asylum laws, and obstacles to registering and accessing identity documents, which occur in many situations.

Fundamental to addressing the array of security threats faced by women is the need for gender equality and women's empowerment. Women's empowerment and the protection of women's rights reduce women's vulnerability and enhance their ability to protect themselves and claim their rights. Women's representation, participation and leadership in protection mechanisms, from political leadership and public administration to security forces (both military and police), and accountability bodies, among others, are essential to ensure better protection for women and girls. In particular, given the crucial linkages between the participation of women in decision-making and their enjoyment of basic human rights, improving participation and leadership in refugee and internally displaced persons settings is essential. All the aforementioned is part of the so-called protection environment that is central to the protection of civilians concept. In accordance with this, in resolution 2122 (2013), the Security Council reiterated its intention, when establishing and renewing the mandates of United Nations missions, to include provisions on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in conflict and post-conflict situations.

In terms of appropriate responses required by a wider variety of actors, the 2014 Aide Memoire for the consideration of issues pertaining to the protection of civilians in armed conflict (see S/PRST/2014/3) by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in close consultation with Security Council members, refers to parties' obligations under international humanitarian law regarding the protection of women and girls; equal protection under the law and equal access to justice for women; the need to ensure that the protection, the rights, and the well-being of women and girls affected by armed conflict are specifically integrated into all peace processes, peace agreements and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction planning and programmes; the need for Governments to implement multi-sectoral strategies to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence; the inclusion of specific provisions for the protection of women and girls in the mandates of United Nations missions; the reports of the Secretary-General on countries in the agenda of the Council needing to include sections devoted to the protection challenges faced by women and girls; States, United Nations entities, regional organizations and other concerned parties ensuring increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict; troop-contributing countries and police-contributing countries expanding the role and numbers of women in United Nations operations; and humanitarian and development actors taking appropriate action against sexual exploitation and abuse and ensuring compliance with the special measures of the Secretary-General, and to facilitate the participation of women, including from civil society, in consultations and outreach activities, among a number of other measures.

The Council has also recognized the importance of Member States and United Nations entities seeking to ensure that humanitarian aid and funding includes provision for the full range of medical, legal, psychosocial and livelihood services to women affected by armed conflict and post-conflict situations.

The Council has further called for the systematic collection, analysis and utilization of sex and age-disaggregated data that is required to assess the specific needs and capacities of women, and to meaningfully measure to what extent recovery programmes are benefiting women, men, girls and boys, by all relevant actors (see S/PRST/2014/21).

Further, the Security Council has addressed the institutional and operational links between the protection of civilians in armed conflict and the responsibility to protect populations from the crimes of genocide (see Security Council resolutions 2150 (2014) and 2171 (2014)), crimes against humanity, war crimes and ethnic cleansing.[2] Also, the recently published Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes is an important tool for the United Nations system and its Member States in understanding the processes, the precursors and the triggering factors that lead to the commission of atrocity crimes. The Security Council may consider reflecting on efforts taken to advance the protection of civilians from genocide and other mass atrocity crimes and further discuss how the framework could be integrated into the analysis and operational strategies guiding peace operations.

Scope and objectives

The debate will seek to highlight the specific impact of armed conflict on women and girls, including measures taken to monitor and better analyse the specific needs of women and to enhance the integration of a gender perspective into the work of United Nations entities and their partners involved in the response. The special needs of girls in this area should also be addressed. Specifically, this open debate will provide an opportunity to:

(i) Draw the attention of the international community to major trends, issues and situations of concern with regard to the protection of civilians, specifically in relation to challenges, threats and needs faced by women and girls, including the state of implementation of international humanitarian law across current armed conflicts, including attempts to tackle the recent rise in violent extremism, and to exchange views on possible courses of action;

(ii) Discuss effective measures for addressing the wide variety of protection threats and needs faced by women and girls in armed conflict affected settings as highlighted above, and how to ensure that women's empowerment is a central component of these efforts;

(iii) Analyse the extent to which protection of women and girls and a gender perspective are currently integrated into the United Nations protection of civilians infrastructure, reporting and action, including but not limited to that of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping

[2] Arria formula meeting held on 14 March 2014 and chaired by France and Nigeria, focusing on the situation in the Central African Republic, in particular on communal and religious tensions and violence.

Operations, the Department of Political Affairs and the Security Council informal Experts Group on the Protection of Civilians;

(iv) Promote stronger monitoring and analysis of women's particular needs and consider an enhanced response, including within the work of entities involved in humanitarian work;

(v) Consider how to integrate women's protection concerns and needs in conflict and post-conflict settings into the various reviews currently being undertaken by the United Nations (namely those on peace operations, peacebuilding, sanctions and the protection cluster and on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, in addition to the global study on said resolution);

(vi) Highlight the need to better understand new operating environments and assess needs, including the gendered differentiation of protection needs as well as other areas for development, including justice and early warning (that is, the sustained and systematic assaults on women's rights as an early warning mechanism on the emergence of organized violence and extremism), and women's rights and protection in international and national accountability bodies, from international tribunals to commissions of inquiry;

(vii) Consider the current use of sanctions committees, inter alia, the inclusion of gender experts to assess the committees, designation criteria relating to the protection of women, gender balance in the appointment of the group of experts and gender-based reporting. In this regard, the Council may consider the Secretary-General's recommendation to the Council to consider expanding the relevant designation criteria to address specific human rights and international humanitarian law violations such as "gross violations of women's rights committed by extremist groups, sexual violence, other forms of gender-based crimes and targeted attacks against women";

(viii) Determine how the Security Council can ensure that the protection of women and girls and efforts to ensure women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the prevention and resolution of armed conflict are applied more consistently to all situations on its agenda, including through monitoring the work of relevant actors and its impact.

Date/time: 27 January 2015, 10 a.m.

Location: United Nations Secretariat, Security Council Chamber

Briefers:

- Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon
- International Committee of the Red Cross Director for international law and cooperation, Helen Durham
- Ilwad Elman, NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security